Conclusion

It is necessary to point out that *Gulliver’s Travels* captures the human condition in its gross way. This work may also present what George Orwell calls “force of belief” \(^{66}\) and attempts to achieve Swift’s aim—“to vex the world rather than divert it” (Williams 1965, 102). However, I have tried to demonstrate that to engage *Gulliver’s Travels* with Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory may not only provide a viable perspective to examine some specific incidents in Gulliver’s voyages, but also underscore the fact that Gulliver’s encounters with different strangers in various voyages may problematize his subjectivity. Throughout *Gulliver’s Travels*, the unity and totality of Gulliver’s subjectivity is made possible by the existence of his homeland, but it is also scrutinized by the presence of the others in exotic lands. In this sense, the idea of homeland may be regarded as the starting point of my discussion. After undergoing several voyages to the alien lands, Gulliver’s final return may offer crucial evidence for his haunting transformation in the end.

In “*Gulliver’s Travels* is the Product of a Sick Mind,” the well-known nineteenth century novelist William M. Thackeray has this to say about the “furious, raging, obscene image” of the Yahoos:

> When Gulliver first lands among the Yahoos [...] he describes himself as almost “stifled with the filth which fell upon him.” The reader of the fourth part of “Gulliver’s Travels” is like the hero himself in this instance.

It is Yahoo language: a monster gibbering shrieks, and gnashing

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\(^{66}\) In his “Politics vs. Literature,” Orwell describes Swift’s world as an “unhappy utopia.” At the end of his analysis, he points out that “Swift did not possess ordinary wisdom, capable of picking out single hidden truth and then magnifying it and distorting it. The durability of *Gulliver’s Travels* goes to show that, if the force of belief is behind it, a world-view which only just passes the test of sanity is sufficient to produce a great work of art” (35).
imprecations against mankind—tearing down all shreds of modesty, past all sense of manliness and shame; filthy in word, filthy in thought, furious, raging, obscene. (Thackeray, 164)

Thackeray points out that the physical resemblance between Gulliver and the Yahoos may facilitate Gulliver’s later transformation: he does not want to be recognized as a member of the Yahoos because they are “filthy in word, filthy in thought.” Moreover, in the end of the voyage, the traveling subject cannot accept the fact that he is a Yahoo-like human being. Thackeray also describes the language of the Yahoos as “a monster gibbering shrieks.”

To some extent, traveling is not only an act of sight-seeing, but also an act of tossing the traveling subject away from the “maternal body,” so to speak. The Houyhnhnms thus describe the reason of all diseases that may serve to characterize Gulliver’s situation on this island:

Their Fundamental is, that all Diseases arise from Repletion; from whence they conclude, that a great Evacuation of the Body is necessary, either through the natural Passage, or upwards at the Mouth. Their next Business is, from Herbs, Minerals […] to form a Composition for Smell and Taste the most abominable, nauseous and detestable, that they can possibly contrive, which the Stomach immediately rejects with Loathing: And this they call a Vomit (245-46).

Here the Houyhnhnms focus on the somatic phenomena of the disease caused by repletion. However, I would like to suggest that this passage also implies why Gulliver is considered a misanthropist.

In my opinion, however, Gulliver’s transformation underscores the unstable nature of Gulliver’s subjectivity. This subject-in-process requires the subject to encounter others and to experience a sense of strangeness which may already exist in
his own body. For Gulliver, the very act of voyage-out may be one of the most effective ways to reexamine the identity of the European Gulliver and the idea of homeland. It also offers different perspectives to address Gulliver’s subjectivity in its encounters with the strangers. Throughout *Gulliver’s Travels*, the anxiety, repression, and self-hatred of a traveling subject may be regarded as psychological symptoms. To me, Kristeva’s psychoanalytic interpretation of the subject, especially her idea of abjection, provides a very useful theoretical model to deal with these symptoms. Thus, the constant movement between home and abroad forms a passage, a route that traveling portends not only a series of moving and stopping, but also a passage between home and abroad so that returning home itself serves as yet another point of departure. With this entire framework in view, the main body of my thesis discusses the subject, the object, and the abject in *Gulliver’s Travels*, respectively.

Therefore, in the second chapter I take Gulliver’s urination in Lilliput as an example to discuss the issue of the representation of the subject. The act of urination is undoubtedly connected with the idea of the body. Gulliver’s urination in the palace of Lilliput serves as a typical example not only to stress the function of the scatological representation, but also to describe its possible influence on Gulliver’s subjectivity. For example, the representation and movement of Gulliver’s body, or part of his body, can be associated with Kristeva’s idea of “semiotic chora.” Gulliver’s urination also pits the traveling subject against the law of the city. Gulliver’s urination has transgressed the law of Lilliput and provides a possibility to examine Gulliver’s subjectivity. In other words, the totality of Gulliver’s subjectivity is rendered impossible because what he has perceived, experienced, and reported in foreign lands positions Gulliver in a process of displacements. Moreover, the idea of the Freudian “fort-da” game not only problematizes the idea of home, but also emphasizes the dynamic part of travel. The “compulsion to repeat” serves to explain Gulliver’s
motivation to travel and to construct a patient-analyst relationship between Gulliver and the strangers. Gulliver’s urination in the island of Lilliput helps to consolidate his identity as a traveling subject. In other words, urinating is an unusual way to represent Gulliver’s subject.

In the third chapter, I provide two examples to illustrate the representation of the object in *Gulliver’s Travels*. To decode and encode what the strangers speak is to understand their linguistic systems and cultures. And the very process of decoding and encoding puts our traveling subject in a web of power relation. The critical point, then, is to realize the limitation of the linguistic system, more specifically, the possible assimilation and resistance occurring in the process of the signifying practice, which engages the subject with a structure of power. Thus, through communicating with others, Gulliver’s subjectivity is called into question. In addition to presenting the ambiguity of the subject-in-progress, the problem of language also posits Gulliver as a speaking subject and the signifying practice is highlighted by the linguistic system of Lagado in the third voyage. Moreover, the subject position of the European Gulliver is undermined by a further discussion of the linguistic system in the Houyhnhnm-land. I cite the Houyhnhnms’ expression of “the Thing which was not” as an example to suggest a possible relation between speech and psychoanalysis. Here, the unnamable part of language is represented by the presence of the Yahoos, which results in Gulliver’s psychological symptom. Therefore, the representation of the object in exotic lands helps readers to recognize Gulliver’s limitation as a speaking subject.

In the fourth chapter, Gulliver’s encounter with the Yahoos allows us to further dwell upon the sense of strangeness within Gulliver’s body. I have pointed out that Gulliver’s “moved body” echoes Islam’s idea of “a sedentary traveler.” Like a sedentary traveler moving and repeating the same route between home and destination, not only does Gulliver encounter his disturbing otherness, but the presence of the
Yahoos has also posited somatic and psychotic challenges to the traveling subject. One of the main differences between Gulliver and a sedentary traveler lies in the fact that Gulliver is transformed by the presence of strangers. To me, this may help broaden the discussion of Gulliver’s subjectivity. Thus, Kristeva’s idea of “strangers to ourselves” is called upon to offer an interpretation of Gulliver’s problematic self.

Through the representation of the Yahoos, Gulliver’s abject self emerges to threaten his own subjectivity. Moreover, the relation between Gulliver’s homeland and the Houyhnhnm-land emphasizes a stark comparison and contrast between two different worlds and discourses. And Gulliver’s final return to his motherland and his transformation there clearly illustrate that a sense of strangeness has already existed in Gulliver’s own body.

To sum up, Gulliver is neither a verdant traveler, nor an inexperienced speaker. Saddled with equipments for traveling, he is well prepared to put out to sea. Gulliver is not a nonchalant, self-serving person. In Lilliput, Gulliver helps the Lilliputians extinguish the fire in the palace. In Laputa, Gulliver helps people realize that the materiality of language is not as explicit as the Laputians expect. As a consequence, Gulliver is still searching for something beyond languages and identities. In my opinion, he seems to be in search of a metaphorical “beyond” that Kristeva describes as the task of a stranger:

[…] the exile is a stranger to his mother. He does not call her, he asks nothing of her. Arrogant, he proudly holds on to what he lacks, to absence, to some symbol or other. […] No obstacle stops him, and all suffering, all insults, all rejections are indifferent to him as he seeks that an invisible and promised territory, that country that does not exist but that he bears in his dreams, and that must indeed be called a beyond. (Kristeva 1991, 5)

Although the “invisible and promised territory” does not appear at the end of the
fourth travel, Gulliver has an ideal world in his mind after his various voyages. From this perspective, I suggest that the human world, though not perfect, offers a possibility to change, imagine, and dream.

Rather than a stock travel account, *Gulliver’s Travels* is remarkably nuanced both in its representations and in its implications and this thesis approaches it by means of Gulliver’s body, speech, and identity. Although Gulliver has returned to his motherland, the traveling subject does not stop moving and traveling, because he is a traveler without homeland. Furthermore, the experience of abjection not only intensifies the satirical elements in *Gulliver’s Travels*, but also differentiates this travel account from previous travel works. Therefore, this thesis tries to demonstrate the complexity of the subject/object/abject in this extraordinary travel narrative which may serve as another example of the profundity and heterogeneity of *Gulliver’s Travels* and Swift’s artistic achievement.